

A Futurist Looks at the Future of Marketing

[Dana Rousmaniere](#) May 24, 2013

Digital marketing is evolving as fast as any other medium on our tablets, smartphones, Google Glass and beyond. To learn about what the future may bring to this marketing genre, we reached out to [Gerd Leonhard](#), an author, strategic advisor, CEO of TheFuturesAgency, and someone whom *The Wall Street Journal* calls “one of the leading media-futurists in the world.”

1. By 2020, most interruptive marketing will be gone. Instead, marketing will be personalized, customized, and adapted to what I have expressed as my wishes or opt-ins — which essentially means that advertising becomes content. Data will be essential, and as users, we’ll be paying with our data — bartering a bit of our personal information in return for the use of platforms and services. Customers will be forming relationships with brands that are built on trust, and if a company breaks that trust, it will be very quickly viral and very quickly over. By 2020, unauthorized targeting of consumers will essentially be useless. I, as a consumer, am going to choose who I want to hear from. I’m going to like things, or I won’t like them, and you will have to earn that from me.

2. The idea of having a separate marketing department is going to vanish. In the future, the “reason to buy” will be socially motivated. If a product is great and everybody loves it, it will sell. And you’re going to stop buying things from companies that don’t fit your values, just because you can’t see giving them the money.

3. Location-based services will be immensely valuable and useful, but not until we have some kind of a privacy bank — some authorized authority or entity that will keep the public safe, and that has a neutral objective. Because clearly, I'm not going to offer up my location if I don't feel safe.

4. Companies are going to try to predict how people feel about their brand, and then adjust in real time by changing features, and starting new conversations with customers in real time. All of the companies of the future will have one big job: to make sure that the customer feels cherished and safeguarded. As Amazon calls it, “customer delight,” will be the number one mission. If you screw that up, everyone will leave.

5. Companies can collect all the data they want, but data alone will never be enough. You still need to reach consumers on an emotional level. The bottom line for marketers will be that if a product or service isn't humanized, it won't sell — because buying something isn't an intellectual process of saying “this could be useful”; it's saying “I really *want* this.”

About Gerd Leonhard:

Gerd Leonhard is considered a thought-leader and global influencer in media/content, technology, marketing & communications, telecom, and culture, consulting many leading global companies. He is an author, strategic advisor, CEO of TheFuturesAgency and a fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts (London). Since 2011, Gerd's area of expertise also includes important “green” topics.